

WEYMOUTH HISTORICAL COMMISSION
McCulloch School/Conference Room
JUNE 2nd, 2009 MEETING
Followed by Public Meeting with MHC Regarding Sea Street Historic District

PRESENT: Ted Clarke/Chairman, Jody Purdy-Quinlan, Mary Dorey, Ed Walker and Steve Puleo

ALSO PRESENT: Jody Lehrer, Community Development Coordinator
Barbara Donahue, Report on 43 Bicknell Street

Chairman Ted Clarke called the June 2, 2009 meeting of the Weymouth Historical Commission to order at 6:00 PM.

Report 43 Bicknell Street

The first order of business was the presentation by Barbara Donahue. She would be presenting 'The Intensive Location Survey Report' on 43 Bicknell Street.

Ms. Donahue went on to say that they detected (5) anomalies in the wall. She noted that the house was built out to the north, emphasizing it can't be disputed that there is definitely something there. She hit upon a number of points in her findings including that the tomb belongs to a western settlement. Further, buckles were found at the site.

There was a question on how they associated with early people. With regard to the Hunt family, who lived there in the 1600's - it was felt they could have had a burial plot. In recapping she said that so far they have nothing conclusive, but the (5) five anomalies.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan noted that seven (7) men died the first year.

Ms. Donahue stated that she spoke with Lang's daughter who spoke with her father, commenting she had never been in the basement. In speaking with her she wasn't sure they actually knew about the site, adding that the mother can't talk.

Chairman Clarke said that there were (7) skulls, with (5) in the wall, with Ms. Purdy-Quinlan interjecting that (2) of the skulls were crushed.

Ms. Donahue commented that the other owner took those two out and crushed them.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan thought someone might have tried to cut them open.

Ms. Donahue pointed out that at this point it was all speculation. She wondered what was taken from the diary. She told members that she didn't know who put the circles on the wall, adding she tried but couldn't reach Adams' grandson. She felt he might know something.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan noted that the grandfather used something on the walls, but not plaster - with the thought that would allow the ghost to possibly pass through.

Ms. Donahue stated that Spencer was very sick at the time.

Chairman Clarke questioned the blockhouse at King Cove.

Ms. Donahue commented that there was a big structure on Great Hill on Winthrop's map, but its accuracy was questioned. She asked 'have things changed since 1600?' In 1707 the survey showed houses on Hunt Hill.

Chairman Clarke noted that the other Winthrop map was compelling because it was done earlier, so based on that he expected there was accuracy in regard to the settlement.

Ms. Donahue said her report was just based on the description of Wessagusset, emphasizing that Pratt had compelling descriptions - as did Merrill, who described it as dismal. She went on to say that in the 1630's Winthrop and Woods were there and at that time it was a more attractive area. She told members they would be hard pressed to come up with the exact spot.

Mr. Walker asked when the blockhouse was built and she said that in the 50's things started getting muddled. She thought that the excavation analysis of one of the anomalies might be helpful. She asked 'is there a tomb?' it wasn't known for sure. Finding the diary, she commented, would be important.

Chairman Clarke asked if there was any info on "Lord".

Ms. Donahue replied that she spoke to Robert Sullivan in Florida, but he didn't have much information - she added that he was pretty old. She went back as far as she could in reference to the charts of the harbor. She said some were acknowledged as being pretty accurate at the time they were created.

Chairman Clarke asked what the law says about 'anomalies'?

Ms. Donahue responded that the MHC/Mass. Historical Commission hasn't reviewed her report as yet - cautioning that they might not agree with it. She said if excavators do a forensic analysis, then you would know.

Chairman Clarke interjected that that would be only part of the story.

Ms. Donahue replied 'but there is something there and it appears to be intact and purposely placed'. She described it as being encased about 3" into the wall. She said when they performed the GPS survey the person started 12" out. Then when she sat with him, he came in from the wall and at that point you could see the anomalies, adding you could also view it in "3D", totally encased.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan commented that when Blanchard built the house and the wife died, he moved them to the family plot.

Ms. Donahue said she would wait and see what the MHC recommends, which would be after they read her report. She is basically recommending the Wessagusset site as a Massachusetts Historic site and was recommending they include 43 Bicknell within the boundaries of that site.

Chairman Clarke asked if this could be done if the property is privately owned.

Ms. Donahue told him that it doesn't make a difference. She said if the property is to be developed and has to go under review, the MHC would check on the quads. They would identify the site and that would trigger another review, restating it doesn't make any difference whose property it is. Again she was recommending that it be included with the Bicknell property, emphasizing that she felt it should be taken seriously.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan said her biggest concern was that property was going to be sold, possibly to a developer. She reported that the Town tried to buy it, but it didn't happen. She felt the property owner would go along, adding that the property is listed on the Demo Delay list. They included something for the Weymouth Historical Commission re. its history in perpetuity, so it could not be disturbed.

Ms. Donahue told members that MHC usually goes along with her recommendation.

Ms. Dorey asked if she felt the MHC would protect it and Ms. Donahue replied 'yes', adding if they change the boundaries of the site - especially taking into consideration that it might be privately developed.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan asked Ms. Donahue, 'so it would be red-flagged?'

Ms. Donahue replied - if it is older than 100 years, the state archeologist automatically becomes involved.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan suggested that possibly the MHC could place a 'rider' on it.

Ms. Donahue reported that she has spoken to Ed Bell. She said she wanted it to go as a popular report and Ed Bell told her it would depend on her findings and what's in the report. She told members "it could go into your library", adding the report could also be tweaked.

Ms. Donahue then told members that they should let her know when they would like her to send the report in to the MHC, adding she has the copy on CD (black and white as well as color copies). It had been previously noted that this information is not intended for review by the general public, as the Freedom of Information Act does not cover archaeological sites. She added that it would be best to wait for the review of the report by the Massachusetts Historical Commission before determining the manner in which to publicize the results.

Ms. Lehrer stated that she thought the key to protecting the property was if there was federal money involved.

Ms. Donahue replied that she thought if the Town knew something was going on, they could get involved. In closing she said, "let's see what the MHC determines" especially if there is a burial there, specifically American Indian. She said they could possibly have survey work done by the developer.

The meeting concluded.

Minutes past meetings

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan moved to approve the minutes of the May 12, 2009 minutes (the date was corrected from 5/9/09 as noted).

Mr. Walker seconded.

UNANIMOUSLY VOTED

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan took a moment to sign the following previously approved minutes: 11/13/2007; 1/8/2008 (approved Feb. 08); 9/11/2007 (approved 11/13/2007) to be filed with the Town Clerk.

Resignation of member Steve Puleo

Chairman Clarke took a moment to acknowledge and thank Steve Puleo for his six years of service to the Town/Commission for his time, efforts and hard work. (This would be his last meeting as his term expired 6/30/2009)

Reports - Town Liaison

Fogg Library Restoration

Ms. Lehrer reported that bids were being solicited for the restoration work at the Fogg Library in South Weymouth. The work is scheduled to begin in July.

Old Business

Canoe Update

Mr. Walker reported that the humidifier has been mounted and the Town Electrician is wiring it. He expected that the work would be completed this week.

Great Hill/Wessagusset Wetlands & Woodlands Park Update

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan stated that plans are to plant Indian Corn at the Park the old-fashioned way. She said she would like to have the name she proposed to be officially approved by the Town Memorial Committee, adding it has been in the works for a year.

Ms. Lehrer replied that she would re-address this request with Jim Clarke.

It was noted that the sign 'Wessagusset Wetlands & Woodlands", would be located on Sea Street by Willow/Ocean Ave. Lastly it was noted that this process all started back in May of 1999.

New Business

Announcements

Chairman Clarke announced that the Commission would be off for the Summer and that the next meeting would take place on Tuesday, September 8, 2009.

Adjournment

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan moved to adjourn at 6:50 PM.

Mr. Walker seconded.

UNANIMOUSLY VOTED

Ted Clarke, Chair

Date

Respectfully submitted, Susan DeChristoforo

Recording Secretary